

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 05675 042206Z
ACTION SPTA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 INR-10 L-03
EB-08 SIL-01 PA-01 /053 W
-----103802 051936Z /64
R 042159Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8319

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PN, PQ
SUBJ: REACTION TO AMBASSADOR'S LETTER TO ESCOBAR

REF: A. PANAMA 5542, B. ICA/PANAMA 5605

1. THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL REACTION TO AMB. JORDEN'S LETTER TO DR. ROMULO ESCOBAR BETHANCOURT (REF B), TAKING THE LATTER TO TASK FOR IRRESPONSIBLE STATEMENTS IN HIS RECENT MEETING WITH PANCANAL PANAMANIAN WORKERS (REF A).

2. PANAMA CITY DAILY "CRITICA", GENERALLY REGARDED AS REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LEFT WING, RAN A FRONT-PAGE NEWS STORY AUG 4, INTERVIEWING AN ALLEGED CANAL ZONE TAXI DRIVER WHO CONFIRMED THAT YES, INDEED, THERE WAS "SOMETHING BRUTAL" GOING ON AGAINST PANAMA. THIS CONSISTED, HE CLAIMED, OF VARIOUS STRATEGIES BY WHICH TOURISTS AND SHIPS' CREWS WERE DISCOURAGED FROM LANDING AND SPENDING THEIR MONEY IN PANAMA. THE WITNESS WAS NOT VERY PERSUASIVE, AND HIS REMARKS DID NOT IN ANY CASE BEAR ON ESCOBAR'S MAIN POINTS.

3. ELSEWHERE, INDEPENDENT RADIO STATION "MIA" ON AUG 3 READ THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT ON THE AIR, WITH GLEEFUL COMMENTS SUCH AS "WHAT A THRASHING" AND "HE IS REALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TANNING HIS HIDE". TERMING ESCOBAR'S STATEMENTS A "BLUNDER", THE RADIO COMMENTATOR NOTED THAT IN MOST COUNTRIES THE AUTHOR OF SUCH AN ACTION WOULD BE DISMISSED. ON THE SAME DATE RADIO "HOGAR" HELD A PANEL DISCUSSION, DURING WHICH ESCOBAR WAS TERMED "INCOHERENT" AND A MAN WHO DOES NOT "RESPECT PRINCIPLES"; ONE PARTICIPANT REGRETTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD "SCOLDED ONE OF OUR

OFFICIALS".

4. COMMENT: ESCOBAR IS NOT VERY POPULAR IN SOME GOVT CIRCLES, AND A GOOD NUMBER OF HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE TOLD US PRIVATELY THEY ARE LESS THAN SORRY TO SEE HIM EMBARRASSED. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ESCOBAR IS GIVEN TO OUTRAGEOUS OUTBURSTS FROM TIME TO TIME. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT FLAP WILL BE FAVORABLE, BY IMPRESSING UPON HIM AND OTHERS SO INCLINED THAT THIS SORT OF OPPORTUNISTIC PROPAGANDA BLAST AGAINST THE UNITED STATES IS NO LONGER APPROPRIATE. WE ARE DOUBTFUL THERE WILL BE ANY LONG-TERM BAD EFFECTS. JORDEN

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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